



Early Childhood Australia

A voice for young children

South Australian Branch Newsletter
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Conference issue

We held our September newsletter over until October so that we could report on the very successful ECA Conference, *Garla Bauondi*, held in Adelaide from 29 September to 2 October. On pages 3 & 4 of this newsletter we have reports of this conference. For more reports on the conference and eventual publication of papers, keep an eye on the conference website

<http://www.ecaconference.com.au/>

National Council Report

The Early Childhood Australia National Council meets annually. All branches have an equal number of votes and may be represented by up to five delegates, one of whom is a member of the National Board of Directors.

This year's National Council meeting was held in Adelaide immediately before the Conference on 27th and 28th September. Each ECA state branch presented an overview of their achievements, challenges and priorities over the past year. The South Australian Branch was congratulated for the extensive work in preparation for the ECA National conference, in particular the commitment of the conference program committee.

CEO Pam Cahir presented a review of ECA's work in raising critical early childhood issues with government departments, other organisations and the early childhood profession. She highlighted the success of the *Hands up for Quality Campaign* and COAG outcome, ECA's commitment to the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care and ECA's initiative in developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

It was acknowledged, following input from each branch, that despite the many issues yet to be addressed in relation to the National Quality Framework, including the EYLF and the National Curriculum, ECA will stay committed to the quality agenda. Updated information will be available through ECA *webwatch*.

Announcing the Early Years Learning Framework Professional Learning Program

The Early Years Learning Framework Professional Learning Program (EYLF PLP) provides ongoing professional support to services as they engage in the EYLF implementation process. The program is a national initiative and will take place in 2010–11. The EYLF PLP has the following separate but interrelated elements:

- a national program of 65 EYLF workshops
- an online EYLF interactive forum available to early education and care settings and educators
- an online EYLF e-newsletter
- EYLF online master classes focused on focused on aspects of the EYLF
- a series of short EYLF professional learning vignettes.

To sign up for the free EYLF newsletter, read more about the national program of EYLF professional learning workshops or participate in the EYLF online interactive forum, go to

<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/eylfpplp/>

Early Childhood Australia SA Branch Annual General Meeting

6.30pm, Monday 15th November 2010

"The Barn" Maid Hotel, 1 Magill Rd Stepney

Forum: Issues and Solutions for Early Childhood in South Australia

Tea, coffee and nibbles will be provided. Drinks will be available for purchase from the bar.

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Conference reports

ECA SA Branch offered two scholarships to enable South Australian early childhood professionals to attend the recent ECA Conference, "Garla Bauondi; Fuelling the Fire" in Adelaide . Reports from the two very worthy recipients are featured below and on page 3.

The first report is by Gillian Jenkins from Port Lincoln

I was the very fortunate recipient of Early Childhood Australia sponsorship to attend the recent 'Garla Bauondi': *Fuelling the fire* conference in Adelaide. The conference both fuelled my existing beliefs and practice as an early childhood educator and confronting new learning provided the challenge to keep the fires burning.



There was a universal message at the conference of listening deeply to children and respecting them as competent, powerful learners and risk-takers who should have a voice in what they create and learn (Claire Warden/ Nature Action Collaborative for Children). Lyn Foote and Fiona Ellis reminded us to create 'children's places' rather than 'places for children' by ensuring children have a voice in developing their play environments and thereby developing their sense of agency and desire to learn. This was relevant to Dave Brown's discussion about the importance of letting go of control and to 'just turn up with a casserole' and allow children to lead the learning. Dave also illustrated how whimsy and logic are both required for creativity. His message was highly relevant since our culture values logic over intuition, facts over fantasy and knowledge over imagination. Early childhood educators need to make room for and value whimsy in their work with young children. Alan Pence suggested that we should not only listen deeply to children but that we should also listen to their families and communities and thereby become better supporters through hearing all of the voices.

Wendy Lee's powerful message was to play with children, be there for them, to choose your attitude and make their day, what a delightful way to approach work with children. I also resonated with her view that it is healthy to challenge children's choices for play. I was also inspired by John O'Toole who demonstrated the power of learning through dramatic performance. John's expert scaffolding led a new found friend and me along a journey of cultural difference, reconciliation and our own 'sorry' celebration. Intense learning considering our journey was supported by a single green pipe cleaner!

I was disturbed and highly concerned when Lester-Irabinna Rigney reported that, in spite of all the measures put in place to narrow the gap for indigenous children, the evidence shows the gap is actually widening. I know I will be influenced by his messages in advocating for indigenous children. I also developed a richer understanding of the importance of advocating for our children's right to play in natural environments and to take physical risks (Claire Warden). This is a timely message in a climate heavy with impending regulation.

I spent a great deal of time in awe of the amazing presenters and their stories and being inspired to be the best early childhood educator I can be. I was disappointed that I missed the opportunity to hear all of the presenters, there were so many I would have loved to split myself several times over. The conference was a delight from the incredible presentations, beautiful food and venue, deluxe accommodation and the opportunity to meet old colleagues and forge new friendships I am indebted to Early Childhood Australia for this amazing opportunity. I am assured of many opportunities to reflect on my learning as I share my understandings and engage in professional dialogue with my peers on Eyre Peninsula.

Gillian Jenkins

Conference reports continued

Our second report is by Bec Cook from Adelaide

Thank you Early Childhood Australia-South Australian Branch who sponsored me to attend the ECA National Conference. The conference intrigued me, challenged my thinking and lifted my spirits. As a leader working in an early childhood setting, it has contributed to my development immensely. Speakers posed questions and made statements that promoted reflection and strengthened my values as a professional. For example - do I find the magic and make the same effort with everyone? I have gained confidence and skills to assist my team and strengthen the way we use pedagogical documentation, how to make children's learning visible and meaningful, assess the information effectively by listening to the children and use this to make a difference for their learning and development. Speakers validated their views with current research and theoretical perspectives, and made connections with the Early Years Learning Framework. This has increased my understandings, particularly of the new curriculum, which I look to share with educators to ensure we engage with current theory in our programs, documentation and practices and have a collaborative approach and shared vision for learning.



I am currently participating in an inquiry-based project with my team which aims to improve our knowledge, pedagogy and environments around sensory learning for infants. Key note speakers like Claire Warden and Janet Robertson made connections with our project aim as they provided significant information about pedagogy and the benefits of nature education for children. I learnt that the outside area is meant to be a unique place for children to engage with rich experiences and deep level thinking. It made me wonder how inspirational our learning space is for children; how we can make improvements to ensure children engage with nature and rich experiences to encourage sustained thinking. I was surprised to learn that educators often interrupt this by questioning children. I look forward to working with my team in inquiring further about nature education for children, and discovering ways to promote an outdoor environment which facilitates deep level thinking through nature and the senses and to support and extend learning without interrupting children.

Bec Cook

South Australian award winner



Congratulations to ECA SA Branch member, Ruth Bowler, who was awarded the Early Childhood Australia / McArthur Management Services Early Childhood Student Encouragement Award. This award is funded by McArthur Management Services. McArthur actively supports the development of the early childhood profession and the provision of high-quality services to children and their families.

Ruth received her award at the 2010 Early Childhood Australia National Conference. The award acknowledged Ruth's commitment to early childhood and her success in early childhood studies. The student encouragement award supported Ruth to attend the 2010 ECA Conference, offered a gold individual membership for 12 months and will support her to attend the 2012 National Conference in Perth. The South Australian branch of ECA will be providing ongoing mentoring to Ruth to support her in her studies and early childhood career.

Early Childhood Australia SA Branch Dinner

Don't miss our next Branch dinner which is an evening with Pam Cahir, ECA Chief Executive Officer



Pam has been the CEO of Early Childhood Australia for twenty years. She is a strong advocate of quality, social justice and equity in all issues relating to the education and care of children from birth to eight years of age.

**7.00pm, Wednesday 3rd November 2010
Café Va Bene
636 Lower North East Rd,
Campbelltown, SA**

**\$35pp ECA member discount or \$45pp non member (GST inclusive)
Please note: Registration can only be accepted with payment.
To register use the attached Tax Invoice/Registration Sheet**

Registrations close: Monday 1st November 2010.

The last ECA SA Branch dinner was on Wednesday 4th August 2010. The guest speaker at this enjoyable dinner was Dr Anne Glover AO. Her subject was *The duality of the modern condition – contradictions in early childhood education and care: Exploring views of children and childhood, family and community, which underpin policies and programs both locally and globally.* Anne can be seen below centre with the new ECA Banner, surrounded by photos of some of her appreciative audience.

